Interview with Dr. Henry Litvin, Korean War physician, present at Inchon and Chosin Reservoir campaigns. Conducted by Jan K. Herman, Historian, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and CDR David Lane, MC, USN, Jenkintown, PA, 15, 21 June 2000. (Died in 2023 at age 99.)

Where are you from?
I'm a Philadelphian

Had you decided to be a physician early on?
Yes, way back. I always wanted to be a doctor.

Where did you go to medical school?
University of Pennsylvania, Class of '48.

Had you decided to specialize in medical school?
I was going to be a family practitioner.

Were you involved with the Navy during your schooling?
That's an interesting story. I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in '43, got drafted that year, and was with a group of guys who were ASTP heading back to medical school.

What was ASTP?
I think it was Army Specialized Training Program. Medical students were ASTP. I was with them. We were cutting grass and being orderlies down at Camp Pickett and Fort Eustis. Then they got orders back home and I was to go with them except I wasn't eligible to go because I hadn't had pre-medical school ASTP. So I sat there alone waiting to go to Europe. Then out of the blue comes a convenience of the government discharge to go to medical school. I got to Philadelphia and started at Penn. I joined the Navy V-12 Program and then the war was over and I was out. But that was my prior military experience--a couple of months in the Army and a couple of months in the Navy V-12.

Did you ever run across Dr. Isidor Ravdin while you were there?
He was my professor of surgery. He was commanding general of the 20th General Hospital in India or Burma during World War II.

He was a fairly active consultant for the Army during the war--kind of a legend actually.
One of his residents was a fellow named Koop.

C. Everett.
Oh, yes.

So you got out of medical school in '48.
Yes. I got out and started a 2-year rotating internship at a place called Philadelphia General Hospital. Back in those days it rivaled Massachusetts General and I was to spend 2 years there as an intern rotating through different services.

What kind of experience did you get?

A great deal of hands-on, which was the beauty of the place. They allowed the interns to do a great deal. But one service I didn't have was orthopedics.

And you probably wished you had, based on where you ended up.

Yes. There were about a hundred or so interns there and the second or third month we were visited by a Navy captain. He suggested joining the Navy. You see that internship didn't pay anything; you were on your own. And here comes this Navy captain who invites us to join the Navy. I thought, why not? World War II was just over and all I had to do was give them 2 years of active duty after I finished my internship. Well, of course, I got through the 2 years on June 30th of 1950, 5 days after Korea started.

What happened then?

I drove up to Newport, RI, to start my Navy career. I had my white uniforms. I had a tux and I was all set for a great season. I was there 3 days and someone handed me orders that read FMF. I had no clue what FMF meant and I asked a fellow what this FMF was. Fleet Marine Force. I said, "You have the wrong person. I'm in the Navy." He then explained to me that the Marine Corps used Navy doctors and the rest is history.

I have a picture of my father and me at the Philadelphia airport when I was en route out to Korea. He had been in the U.S. Army Infantry in the trenches at Argonne so he knew what trench warfare was like. I was going with the Marines but it had not yet sunk in. There was a look on his face which indicated that he probably knew what I was getting myself into.

Did you soon know that you were headed for Korea?

Yes. I assumed that since I was going to the Fleet Marine Force, I would probably wind up in Korea. When I got to Korea and landed at Inchon, I hadn't had, during my Army or Navy experience, one minute of indoctrination, boot camp, or anything resembling training.

Hadn't you gotten any kind of orientation at Newport?

Nothing. I had a couple of days up there. It was summertime and I was through my internship, and I was interested in what fun I could have. So there was no indoctrination at all.

Had did you get to Korea? Did you go to Camp Pendleton first?

I flew out to Pendleton and that was kind of chaotic. I was sent to the amtracs battalion and we were loaded aboard ship. When we got to Kobe after a 2- or 3-week trip, a lot of young officers reassured me "Not to worry, doc. You're going to be with an amtrac battalion and you won't be with the infantry." So I took some comfort in that. But as soon as we got to Kobe I was transferred to an infantry battalion.

What was your title?

I was a lieutenant (j.g.). Doc was my title.

Were you a battalion surgeon?

When I got to Kobe I was transferred to the Second Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. I joined up with Fox Company. Each battalion had three rifle companies. The Marines were

fighting before Inchon and they were known as the First Provisional Marine Brigade. But they were short staffed. They had three infantry battalions per regiment and two companies per battalion. So I joined up with Fox Company. That was my first contact with the Second Battalion, 5th Marines.

So you suspected that things had gone a little awry at that point?

I was beginning to get an uncomfortable feeling. We had a typhoon when we transferred ships and I joined Fox Company. The commanding officer was Uel Peters. Fox Company was going to help beef up the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines which just had two rifle companies at the brigade level before Inchon.

When we got to Inchon some of the guys helped me put a pack on, which I could barely carry because I was not in good shape. I was a busy intern who didn't do much about exercise or any kind of conditioning. I had a pack on my back for the first time on the 15th of September 1950.

Before you went down the cargo net, before the actual landing, had you been briefed at all as to what to expect when you hit the beach or did it all come out of the blue like everything else?

I was not briefed at all. I heard scuttlebutt. We were going to land somewhere. And then while I was standing there on deck I saw planes strafing the beach. I saw other vessels bombarding the beach. There was a war going on and I figured I was in trouble. I wondered how one avoided getting shot. I'm a doc and what am I supposed to do?

When I got to the edge of the ship, I saw a cargo net for the first time in my life. And I saw that little landing craft way down. I quickly ended up with my feet in one rung, my hands in the very next rung, and the rest of me hanging like a sack of potatoes.

Just dangling over the edge with the landing craft beneath you.

Yes. I was on my way down but I had managed to get one foot at one level and my hands on the next level. Some Marine climbing down next to me guided me and I made it down.

So you went from the transport into an LCVP or some kind of landing craft. And you had your medical pack with you?

I had some medical equipment but I had mostly clothes and blankets and shelter halves and an entrenching tool, stuff I'd never seen before.

Since you had no weapons training, you didn't have a sidearm?

I was handed a carbine several hours before we climbed down the cargo net. I asked for a .45 instead, thinking it would be easier to carry. The next thing I knew we were hitting Red Beach. There was a 10-foot seawall. The front of this landing craft opened up and, of course, I saw these young kids running and climbing up that wall, so I figured I had better do the same thing. There was a hell of a racket--shells blowing up all over the place, ships firing overhead. I couldn't climb up that wall. I didn't have the strength. And then the next wave came in and I got thrown over it.

They picked you up and threw you over?

Yes they did. So I ended up on the beach being fired upon by the North Koreans and also from our own LSTs. Their 20mm cannons were shooting at Korean positions but their fire was dropping into where we were.

What do you remember about treating your first casualty?

I remember very vividly my first casualty. Actually the first casualty I couldn't treat was a sergeant who stood up with a red bandanna and tried to wave off our LST's 20mm cannon fire. He was cut in half. Later on, the first casualty I remember. . . We were in a little store we were using for an aid station. They brought a guy in with a gaping wound of his thigh. He had a tourniquet on below it--below the wound. He was completely bled out--white. That was the first casualty I saw.

So you couldn't do much for him, then.

No. When you see the first wounded guy, you just do what comes naturally. The biggest item we had that we used so much were battle dressings. They looked like giant Band-Aids but instead of sticky stuff, you just wrapped them on the wound and tied them around. They were very handy.

Things were going on all around you. Did you have any corpsmen with you?

Yes. There was a hospital chief corpsman named Nunn, who I tried to follow and watch because I heard that he had been in the Pacific. I figured that he had some experience and knew what to do.

Had you any encounters with other physicians before Inchon?

The first doctor I remember meeting was a Dr. [Chester] Klein, already with the Second Battalion, 5th Marines. He had been in combat at the Naktong River. I met him at some point between Inchon and Kimpo Airfield.

Had he had the same experience that you had, that is no briefing, no knowledge of what was going on?

I don't know. He had been in combat but I don't know what his prior experience had been. I got the feeling afterward that when Korea broke out they shoved a lot of doctors over there with no training or indoctrination. At the time I felt scared half out of my mind. Afterward I learned that this was not an unusual experience for doctors.

We left you pinned down on the beach. That was on the 15th of September 1950.

It was 5:40 in the afternoon. There was a light rain and you could smell the cordite.

And the tide was up at that time.

The tide had to be up because there were 30- or so foot tides and we had to get in while the tide was up because when it went out there were huge mud flats.

So you were pinned down just over the seawall.

We were pinned down for maybe an hour or two. When I saw guys getting up and moving, I got up and moved with them. I didn't like the idea of being left alone. About then we came under mortar fire.

What was going on when you got inland?

The first night we stayed in a little hut in the town of Inchon. The second night we slept in an open field. About 2 or 3 in the morning everybody awoke to a very strange sound. It was the sound of tanks. It was a sound I'll never forget. Everybody got ready to do something. There was a lot of gunfire and then there were three loud explosions. The next day when we filed by we were told that Marines with bazookas had taken them out. They were still smoking and there were the burned bodies of North Koreans.

How many tanks were there?

There were three tanks as I recall.

Did you see any live North Koreans?

No. I didn't see the enemy until Chosin. We had an awful battle on September 23rd, 24th, and 25th. There were a lot of casualties but I only saw them as they were brought into the aid station. The Chinese I saw at Chosin.

Between the landing at Inchon and that first night . . .

There was something really important that happened between Inchon and Seoul and that was our battalion taking Kimpo Airfield, which was between Inchon and Seoul. There were troops in front of us. The battalion headquarters company, which I was part of, was not in the lead. The rifle companies were in the lead and we came along behind them. But you felt like you were walking onto this huge airfield and you knew the enemy was around because you heard rifle fire and bullets whizzing. But it was getting dark. We were told to put our aid station there and we did. There didn't seem to be a whole lot going on. I guess we should have dug in but instead we got some litters out and just flopped down on them. In the middle of the night our eyes opened up. If you can imagine being flat on your back and looking up and seeing all these tracers crisscrossing the sky. That was quite an experience. And there was another sound you can't imagine, the sound of a battleship's 16-inch shells flying overhead. They sounded like freight trains. I was scared to death. Someone said, "Don't worry, doc. They're going overhead.

Or so you hoped.

A day or two later, when we moved, we came across these huge craters and I was told they were 16-inch shell craters.

What did the aid stations you set up look like?

The first night we were in what looked like a bombed out store near the English legation in Inchon, as I recall.

Tell us about the aid station at Inchon.

As I said, the first night we set up in a store. They brought wounded in and we'd treat them. The second night we were out in the field, the third and fourth night we were still around Inchon in the open. Between Kimpo and Seoul were a series of fields. I was told, "Doc, there's your aid station." So that's where we worked. It was warm so I don't remember tents being set up. We were out in the open most of the time.

What did the chain of command look like?

I knew I was at battalion and I understood that I was part of a regiment. And I understood there was a division surgeon and a regimental surgeon.

Did you recall what kind of equipment you had in your aid station?

Vaguely--battle dressings, morphine, litters, sulfa, splints. I can't recall IV fluids. I didn't see an inventory prior to Inchon.

Did you understood the concept of medical evacuation from a battalion to a regiment to a division?

I had a basic assumption. There has to be a rear; I know I'm close to the front so there's gotta be somebody behind. I never knew about MASH until years later when the show came out. I remember sitting with my wife watching it and being furious. They were laughing and I never remember much laughter. I don't remember any laughter where we were.

I never knew about medical companies until January '51 when I was transferred to one.

What did your medical unit consist of? There was you, and you mentioned a chief.

There were two hospital chiefs and maybe 8 to 10 corpsmen of various grades at battalion level. And each of the three rifle companies had 10-12 corpsmen. What worried us was getting a call from a company saying, "Doc, we're out of corpsmen." And having to look around and send someone up to the rifle companies, which was like a death sentence. As it turned out, when all this was over, I thought back on things. I had over a hundred percent replacement of corpsmen. The corpsmen up with the rifle companies were getting shot at an alarming rate and we were sending up replacements all the time. Had I had some training, I might have known what the proper military procedure was for picking replacements. But it seemed that the corpsmen that I'd run into at the battalion aid level kind of stayed put and it was only in a desperate situation where I had to send one of them up. I didn't do much of the sending between Inchon and Seoul. It was only afterward when Dr. Klein left and a new doctor named Sparks joined us that I had to do the sending. I remember a corpsman coming up under cover of dark and the chief got their names under the cover of a blanket and I'd send them up to Dog Easy or Fox Company and they never lived to see daylight in Korea. I've never ever gotten over that.

How many corpsmen would you have had at that aid station?

Maybe 8-10.

After this action in the field and after Kimpo was taken, you moved on toward Seoul.

That was the worst fighting in terms of numbers of casualties. They were coming in at a terrible rate. You were working day and night, day and night. I remember jeeps with one or two litters on them and box ambulances. There was always a steady stream coming in. You were literally stopping bleeding, splinting fractures, giving something for pain, and sending them back. It seemed at battalion level you were just doing first aid. I don't know that I had any suture material and, even had there been any, you were never clean enough to do anything.

They would then take them back toward Inchon?

Yes, towards the rear. To this day, I've never talked to a senior medical officer who could tell me what the hell was going on. I'm only guessing that the casualties went back to regiment, then back to division or back to a medical company, which I learned about only after Chosin when I got sent to one for a couple of months before I was sent home.

How did you do at the aid station, supply-wise?

Someone would tell me, "Doc, we're running low on so and so." I'd then send someone down to regiment. One thing that bothered the hell out of me these past 50 years. I don't remember plasma or IV fluid.

We were just going to ask you about IV fluids.

I can't recall IV fluids at my battalion. They may have had them at other battalions. Why I didn't ask for them, I don't recall. But, again, I was a new kid on the block. Doc Klein was the senior guy there and I was desperately trying to keep up with what was going on and adapt to being in a war. Had we had IV fluids at Chosin it would have frozen solid; it was too cold. But did we have it down south, I can't recall.

So you were really grasping at straws to treat shock.

Yes. I was literally grasping at straws.

You couldn't take care of blood volume if you didn't have anything.

I can't recall.

By the sounds of things, it was anything but a cake walk from Inchon to Seoul.

It was an unbelievably chaotic nightmare. Again, at the time, I simply reacted to what was in front of me.

You were still using morphine syrettes at that time?

Yes.

You had plenty of that?

We never ran out of morphine. There was the ridiculous case of 2-ounce bottles of brandy which we never used until we got up to Chosin.

Then you probably didn't have enough of that.

I just remember using it once or twice for COL [Harold] Roise's birthday--a couple of bottles each, and once with a young lieutenant . . . That's another story. I'll get to that when we get to Chosin.

After Kimpo was taken, then you had an airfield to get your casualties out.

That's correct. They either used that airfield or got them back to Inchon where they took them out by boat.

Were you involved in that evacuation procedure?

No. If there was any evacuation from Kimpo, it would have to have been from division, regiment, or medical companies that were behind us. At battalion level, you were primarily

concerned with the battle injuries and getting them treated and back to someone who could do more than you could do up front in the dirt.

After you took Kimpo, you moved into Seoul and there was a lot of urban fighting.

There was fighting toward Seoul when there were a lot of casualties. Once we got into to Seoul I don't remember much in the way of fighting. The house to house fighting was done by the Marine rifle companies. I have no memories of the fighting in the city itself.

Did you go into Seoul yourself?

Yes. When we got to Seoul things got real "classy." One of the places I remember setting up our aid station was at Ewha Women's University. We had a couple of rooms on the ground floor. I remember doing pediatrics, seeing the little Korean kids after the fighting quieted down.

What do you remember caring for those children?

A lot of skin disease and GI problems.

Did your battalion have any responsibility for public health?

There was someone else in charge of chlorinating the water and there were trucks bringing water up. We had our C-rations and I remember kitchens being set up. But I didn't have much in the way of responsibility for public health.

Was the city pretty well trashed by then?

It was trashed. It smelled. Everywhere in South Korea you smelled human waste. They fertilized their fields with human excreta. We were in Seoul a week or two and then went north of Seoul for a period of time. It was hill country. I remember sleeping in a cave with two or three corpsmen. We crawled in on our hands and knees along with a couple of large rats. We all slept quietly and peacefully by candle light in this cave. It seemed great because we were out of the elements.

Was there much fighting at this point?

There wasn't much. There was the occasional wound. It was not active combat.

The North Koreans were in retreat by then.

Yes. In flight. We came in at Inchon to pinch between Wonsan and Inchon and we trapped all the North Koreans south of us. This was MacArthur's last genius stroke and after that it was downhill.

Where did you go from there? Did you go back to Inchon and reboard your ships?

That's right. We thought we were going to Japan. We thought we were going home because the North Koreans were fleeing. All I knew was we ended up going like a yo yo up and down the east coast.

What kind of ships did you disembark on?

They were large transports. Down below, there were bunks stacked four and five deep. And so often the guy on top would have puked and it hit everyone on the way down. It was awful. Troopships are awful. Doctors had good accommodations on top but the guys down below in the hold had terrible, terrible living conditions.

But instead of Japan, you were heading for Wonsan.

Yes. The reason we were going up and down the coast was because there were so many mines in that harbor. Our minesweepers needed 2 weeks of sweeping to make it safe to land. By the time we landed--and I was ready for something like Inchon again--this was a quiet, unopposed landing. There was a big sign from Bob Hope welcoming us. The ROK [Republic of Korea] troops had come up by land and had pretty much cleared Wonsan, not completely because once we were ashore we got some sniper fire.

Well, Dr. Litvin. We're going to stop here. This is a good prelude for next week when we come see you and move into the Chosin campaign. We've gotten you warmed up anyway.

[21 June]

The other day you told us about the lack of training and that you were totally unprepared for what you encountered in Korea. Can you elaborate?

I had no concept whatsoever of what the medical facilities in a field situation were like. The first time I remember being together with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines was at Inchon during the initial assault. On 3 September 1950, in the middle of Typhoon Jane, 20 corpsmen and I had reported to LT Uel Peters, commanding officer of Fox Company, aboard ship in Kobe. His company would give COL Roise's 2nd Battalion its third rifle company. We would join up with the other companies for the landing at Inchon. The day after the landing I found myself in a clearing near some farm houses. There I met COL Roise and other officers and men. It was our second day in combat when I became aware of something called Headquarters and Service Company. That day I met Dr. Klein and the corpsmen I'd be working with.

Did they expect you to pitch a tent somewhere and start seeing patients?

I think I told you that we had 10 to 20 corpsmen in the aid station. It was more like 8 to 10. There were two chief corpsmen who had been in the Pacific in the Second World War so they kind of knew what was going on. There was a doctor who had been with the brigade who I tried to emulate. I watched what he did and I did the same thing. I learned what to do by seeing what others did. The corpsmen pitched the tents!

After I spoke to you on the phone the other day I got to thinking about what I told you about the fighting between Inchon and Seoul. There's a lot to be said. The bottom line is battalion aid has to be close enough to the platoons that are fighting so that you could carry a wounded man to the aid station. You can't be a mile or two away. You've got to be as close as possible. So we were right behind the frontline troops. Between Inchon and Seoul, the name of the game was "Get them back to Regiment as fast as possible." You saw them, you stopped the bleeding, you splinted the limbs that needed splinting, and there was an ambulance waiting to take them back. It was a fast turnover. Nobody stayed at the aid station very long. But, hopefully, nobody went back bleeding.

Remember the story I told you about seeing that first guy with the tourniquet distal to the wound? My impression was, nobody I send to the rear is going to get there bled out. So everybody was checked to make sure there was control of bleeding. But there was rapid, rapid evacuation, which I think was terribly important. What we did was first aid. We were in the dirt. And we were moving constantly so you were never set up for very long. You'd get to one place and be there for a half a day or a whole day and then you'd be moved someplace else a mile or two down the road. We were always out in the open. The only place I knew of was Regiment. I had no knowledge that there were medical companies somewhere. I knew there was a Regiment backing us up so anything we got went to Regiment.

While you were treating these people wounded between Inchon and Seoul, was there any attempt treat shock with plasma?

There had to have been plasma. There had to have been saline. It's blocked out of my memory. I can remember wounds. I can remember battle dressings. I can remember sulfa, and I can remember seeing some captured Russian DDT.

You mentioned that on the road from Inchon to Seoul you had to pick corpsmen to go up to the rifle companies.

This was after I started to realize we were getting lots of corpsmen being hit. Besides the Marines who were coming in as casualties, there were lots of corpsmen also. We were out of corpsmen. There was a high turnover. For me, one of the hardest things was looking around the aid station and deciding which of these guys you were with for the last week or so. . . Which to send to the companies. That was like sending someone out to die. You'd get the request and these kids you were working with were looking at you and you had to send them. And that was hard. It was a little easier when new ones came up. I sent them. Whether that was the right thing to do, up till this day I don't know. Maybe there was a procedure where you'd give them some time at battalion aid and then send them. I don't know.

In *Breakout*, you mention these two blonde kids who came up.

I'll never forget that. I remember being under a blanket with the hospital chief and a flashlight. He was writing the names of these two blonde kids. I remember talking to these kids who were just off the ship. And I told them they were going up to Dog, Easy, or Fox Company. And off they went. And I remember the next morning getting word from the CO.

"We need more corpsmen."

"I just sent you two."

"They're dead."

I took two kids and sent them up to die. I always felt personally responsible. A lot of guilt was associated with. . . There were a number of times when guys died in your arms or if not your arms, you're kneeling next to them. And they die. Many times, the last word out of their mouth. . . Mom. Mom. Not God, not country . . . Mom.

And these were big bruisers. Stuff like that kind of stays in your mind and never goes away.

The other day you described your impressions of Seoul.

It was very primitive. There was only one building I remember. And that was Ehwa Women's University. I'll never forget the name because it was on a plaque and we had a room

or two in the basement and we had a sick bay there. And we were there for a day or two. The rest of the town was a broken down bombed out. I remember huts, dirt streets. I don't remember paved streets, although I'm sure there were. I didn't get to tour Seoul. I was just in one spot.

You said you treated some of the natives.

They brought the children in; most of them had skin rashes, skin infections, GI problems.

Did you see women?

The thing I remember about the women was that they smelled from garlic, their shirts came to the nipple line, and they were exposed for easy breast feeding. I thought how odd that was, but practical.

I would guess there was also an absence of young men of Army age.

I saw old men with a characteristic top hat but no young men.

Where did you go from Seoul?

From Seoul we went to a position north of Seoul which was kind of a roadblock and we were there a couple of days. That was where I told you I actually lived in a cave in the side of a hill. Two or three of us would climb in every night. There was a candle or a lantern. I saw big rats in there. There weren't many battle injuries because it was kind of quiet.

Then you all went back aboard ship then. You said you were involved in what you described as "Operation Yo Yo." You were waiting for Wonsan Harbor to be de-mined. Didn't that take about a week?

A couple of weeks, I think. I recall about 2 weeks. We landed on the 27th of October and I think we left Inchon on the 10th or 12th of October. And then I thought we have to assault the beach and go through that nightmare of Inchon again. But it was very quiet.

During that week or so aboard ship, there must have been a tremendous amount of boredom. What did you all do?

We played cards and we talked. I remember going down in the hold where the guys lived. The bunks were five deep and it was smelly and horrible. Of course, I was preoccupied with wondering what was coming next?

What was the landing at Wonsan like? I guess that was pretty tame after what you had witnessed at Inchon.

It was quiet but for a little sniper fire, but nothing like Inchon. In fact, there was a sign that said, "Bob Hope welcomes you." The ROKs got there ahead of us so they were welcoming us. I remember we stayed in what looked like a factory building.

From mid-October to early November, we slowly worked our way up east of the [Chosin] Reservoir. On the way we stopped at Koto-ri.

Koto-ri had a house that looked like a little train station no bigger than this room. It was a good place to have an aid station. We piled our litters in there and we were going to sleep on them because there was no combat going on. There was a stove and one of the corpsmen had found a little dog a couple of days before and kept him with us. It was maybe 10 below zero. We all went to sleep that night with the stove on. In the middle of the night the dog woke us.

There was maybe a half-inch of diesel oil covering the floor. It had sprung a leak. And the fire was still going. Out we went. We all could have been fried.

When did this occur?

This was in November. We got to Koto-ri and continued up to Hagaru. There we went right to the east side of the Reservoir where it was quiet. Patrols that went out brought in Chinese prisoners every once in a while.

And then suddenly the weather turned cold. You mentioned that you were having breakfast one day--eating some eggs--and had put your coffee cup down. What was that all about?

I was gulping eggs down and when I went to get the coffee, it was frozen. I couldn't imagine coffee freezing. We didn't have a thermometer but it had to have been well below zero.

Did it occur to you right then that practicing medicine was going to be a difficult thing?

Yes. I attended a meeting of Marine officers somewhere up on the way to Hagaru-ri. It had to be early in November. At that meeting they talked about the move we were going to make north. Many things were discussed but the thing that stuck in my mind was a high-ranking Marine officer's comments about frostbite. I vividly remember him talking about frostbite the same way he'd view a sunburn, namely something that could be avoided. So when I first heard about frostbite I figured these guys were going to get into trouble. But it couldn't be avoided when you were pinned down, had sweaty feet, and couldn't change your socks. If you were wounded and lying there you couldn't change your socks. If you were wounded, and were strapped to a vehicle, your sweat froze. In hindsight, it's a miracle that anybody avoided frostbite.

Were you the only physician at this point?

There was Dr. Sparks. He joined us after Seoul. When I first got to Inchon there was a Dr. Klein, who left after Seoul and was replaced by Dr. Sparks. I was the senior guy. We were both jagees. I learned a lot by watching what Klein did. And I learned a lot by watching what the chief hospital corpsman did. I learned by watching. I learned when you ate, when you slept, when you did anything. I walked around and watched. It was on the job training.

I would imagine that very little of what you learned in medical school proved very useful to you.

Nothing. Nothing. Do you have to go to medical school to apply a pressure dressing or give morphine?

You said earlier that here you were right out of internship and felt you could do anything.

Anything. You carried yourself like you were hot stuff. You got through medical school. You got through internship. Let's go seize the world. Let's go join the Navy. But then you find yourself in combat. Infantry battalion level medicine was primitive. People are dying or being brought in dead.

When we were looking at those photographs earlier you described the crust on the snow and how the men's feet would press through and then it would refreeze.

This was around the aid station on the days it snowed. We were on the east side of the Reservoir when it was still quiet for us. At one point we were in what looked like a store with broken out windows. There was huge pot inside. I remember filling that thing with water and building a fire under it so I could get a bath, the first one in a month or two. It must have been pretty quiet for me to want to do that . . . getting all my clothes off and jumping into that thing. I was such a city boy I didn't think. I went in and hit the hot bottom with my feet and that was the end of my bath.

What do you specifically remember about the frostbite?

The tips of your ears and nose were affected. It didn't resemble trench foot like they had in World War I, when feet were cold and wet for long periods of time. We were wearing shoe pacs which were rubberized boots. If you walked 20 feet in them your feet started to perspire. And if you stopped, they'd freeze. I was in a position where I could maybe change my socks once a day. But there were a lot of troops who could not change their socks if they were pinned down or fighting. Changing your socks at 20 below with a stiff breeze is murder, but they did it. We'd go up and down the line telling people to stamp their feet, change their socks, and keep moving. But when the troops got really exhausted they'd just slow down.

As for clothing, how were the Marines equipped?

Everybody had long johns, two layers of trousers, those flannel shirts, maybe a field jacket. Everybody had a parka and gloves. When we tried to deal with the wounded we'd take our gloves off and our fingers would freeze.

Water must also have been a problem in that intense cold.

Everybody was dehydrated. I had never experienced such an overwhelming thirst. You read about the exhaustion and the cold but you never read about the dehydration. There was nowhere to get a drink. Up in those mountains the humidity is low. We were losing a lot of moisture from our skin. Once I grabbed a canteen and found myself trying to suck ice; the contents were frozen solid. There were water trucks down south but I never saw them up north. We had to melt snow to make coffee.

Everybody had runny noses. It ran into their moustaches and froze. Everybody was filthy, grimy, dirty, and lousy--crawling with lice. And can you imagine having to move your bowels. The wind's blowing 20 or 30 miles an hour and it's 40 below zero and you have to go. You do what you have to do and you don't have time to wipe. Peeing was easy.

How could lice survive in that temperature? How did you get them in the first place?

We first got them when we used one of the huts that had straw.

All you needed was one stop at that hut.

And we were all crawling with lice. I had some DDT, 5 percent, and I remember using it but we still crawled with them. It wasn't until we got aboard ship that we got rid of them.

I've read about warming tents. What were they like?

The pyramidal tent had a stove in the middle. There were other tents, when we could put them up, where guys could go in out of the cold and stand near the stove for awhile. However, they weren't always available. At Hagaru and Koto-ri, where we had room, we were able to set them up and get warm.

What did you use for stoves in those tents?

It had to be diesel oil. It wasn't wood. We worked by dim light.

Do you remember your first frostbite case? Was it something that made an impression on you?

Yes. But the people who saw the real frostbite were the medical personnel in the rear who got them later. We never took the boots off our Marines to look at their toes. Everybody was completely covered. If you were treating a wounded, you'd cut through the clothing to where the wound was or you'd put a battle dressing over the clothes and make sure the wound wasn't leaking blood.

I remember vividly one Marine after Yudam-ni. He approached the tent and it looked like he had a block of pink cotton candy sitting on his shoulder. I couldn't imagine what I was looking at. As he got closer, I realized it was pink, frothy ice. I broke it off and then realized that he had been hit and had a bleeder above his ear. Frozen blood is frothy pink. It was actively bleeding and freezing, bleeding and freezing.

Did you find that the intense cold inhibited bleeding?

It seemed so. The wounds we saw had already been wrapped by corpsmen in the companies. If the battle dressing was in place, even over their clothing, and there was no leaking blood, we just left it on and left the wounds alone.

What did you do with the patients once you'd treated them?

Down south when you treated the wounded, you checked for bleeding, splinted them, gave them something for pain, and evacuated them. Up in the north you did the same things but you had to hold onto them because there was no way to get them out. But where did we hold them? We were getting hundreds of casualties yet there was no place to really put them.

The first night--on the 27th [November]--I had just a few wounded to send back. I asked the colonel, "Can I send them back?"

"Yup, send them back."

Later on the following day I came across the jeep I had sent them on. It was burned. And then I found out that we were surrounded. I hadn't known that when I sent them out. I'll never forget that burned jeep.

When you said the colonel, was that the regimental colonel?

Battalion. Harold Roise. He did something that morning. One of the positive things that never leaves you is that the Marines take care of their Navy corpsmen, their docs. They look out for them, and they protect them. Suddenly we became aware that instead of continuing west at Yudam-ni to hook up with the 8th Army, we were going back. The headquarters company for 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines was on the side of the road. There was a hill. I remember people saddling up and then hearing that there were four more Marines up that hill with Fox Company and that they hadn't come down yet. I remember the colonel telling somebody, "Hold up till the

doc gets them." And I thought, "He's holding up a whole battalion rear guard movement until the doc gets four people down." I just had a good feeling that they were looking out for their men.

When we got down to the town of Yudam-ni we had to stop for awhile because we were under fire. "Doc, over there is your aid station." The colonel would pick the most sheltered place. So I got a good feeling about how the Marines took care of their Navy people.

The Chinese would attack at night or in bad weather.

At night or when it snowed, for the most part.

And they would put on these frightful performances beforehand with bugles and whistles. What do you remember about that?

I remember some whistles and bugles but the thing I remember most were the mortar explosions. All night long you heard these explosions. After seeing all the bullet holes in the canvas, you wanted to go outside and stretch and look around. In the morning, I remember seeing hundreds of unexploded Chinese mortar shells on the ground.

I imagine all those explosions didn't do much to improve your hearing.

I've been deaf since. I had tinnitus then, which I didn't pay much attention to but I'm sure my deafness today is related to that.

What were the conditions in the tent?

We worked at night because that's when most of the wounded were coming in. We had no table. Most of the time we were on our knees or bent over somebody on the ground or on a litter doing some procedure.

I never saw a pair of sterile gloves in Korea. I never saw forceps or anything sterile in Korea. The only things sterile were the battle dressings and the morphine syrettes.

I'd just like to get a feel for the medical flow of things. There were the rifle companies, and they'd be further behind you to protect your rear guard.

The rifle companies were up on the hills. Headquarters, with the colonel and battalion aid, was at the bottom of the hill. Rifle companies usually encircled H+S Co., unlike in the south, where rifle companies were like a football team's offensive line protecting the quarterback.

A Marine would be wounded and a corpsman or litter bearers would bring them to your aid station, which was a tent. What kind of equipment did you have?

Battle dressings, sulfa, morphine.

Were you very concerned about infection in this very cold climate?

We didn't know how long it was going to be until the wounded person could get to further care. So we protected them by using sulfa. I think it was more for ourselves. We were doing something. At the time you didn't think to much about it. You just did it.

I've heard that corpsmen would keep the morphine syrettes from freezing by keeping them in their mouths?

They'd keep them close to their body. Some guys kept them in their mouths.

Did you ever see plasma up there?

We never had IV fluids at any time at our battalion level. They would have frozen solid. I don't know whether they had them at Hagaru..

Because you couldn't evacuate them, your group of wounded must have just kept growing.

It kept growing and growing. When we had wounded and no place to send them, we'd push them to the side or get them into another tent, if there was one--and usually there wasn't--or out in the open covered with a tarp. Or we'd put them in a truck and stack them like cordwood. We stacked them the way the dead were stacked. We tied them on the hoods of jeeps or trucks. There was no regiment to send them back to. We were the end of the line--the rear guard. If they could walk, they walked.

Were you able to check on your patients during the day?

The wounded we had were checked by corpsmen on the road. I told you about the fellow with the white phosphorous wound. I also remember a lieutenant. He looked like a very young kid--blonde hair. They brought him in and put him down. There was a bullet hole in the side of his helmet. He was lying on the snow and breathing but not conscious. I removed his helmet and his brains spilled out like oatmeal onto the snow. He was still breathing and had a pulse. The bullet had entered and ricocheted around the inside of his helmet and just . . . I remember putting the helmet back and saying, "Move him out there." These are memories that stay in your head forever.

Did you ever wonder what became of the casualties you treated, whether they survived?

I've thought about that over the years.

Did it bother you at the time?

At the time I didn't think about it. You were doing what you had to do. When is the next mortar going to land? When are we getting out of here? Then afterwards you'd think, "Where did the wounded go?" Well, we put them on trucks. At the time, we did everything we could have done for them. Those that couldn't walk had greater cold injury.

You must have been absolutely exhausted by this time.

We went days and nights without rest. We were exhausted. We went without eating. We were starved but not hungry. When we stacked the wounded on trucks, you thought, Thank God, at least they are getting to lie down. But I'm sure many wounded froze. The fact that I kept walking, like most of the guys at the aid station, helped me avoid freezing. If you stopped and sat, you'd freeze. I can't prove that many of the wounded froze, but I suspect that's what must have happened.

You said earlier that you found a way of sleeping while you were walking out.

I found myself suddenly waking up and realizing that I had been walking while I had been sleeping. There were few times when you could get horizontal because it was at night

when the casualties were coming. During the day you were moving so you were going days with no real sleep. And we were going days without any food. At one point they found a cache of Tootsie Rolls so we loaded up on Tootsie Rolls.

You already mentioned that you had no military training whatsoever. Therefore, you had no training with personal weapons to protect yourself.

When we were in Seoul, three lieutenants--Earl Sansing, [Karle]Seydel, and [Tilton A.] Anderson, at my request, took me out and showed me how to fire a carbine and a .45. I remember that vividly. There was only one time in Korea where I was ever ordered to use a weapon. The first night at Yudam-ni, all the corpsmen, the chaplain, and I were ordered out of our tents and we stretched out on the ice. Lying next to the chaplain. I thought, "We're both non-military. He deals with the spirit and I deal with the body. We both help people. Where do we get off firing weapons?" I figured he wouldn't fire and wondered if I would. Then CAPT [Franklin] Mayer had us aim down a draw and said, "When I tell you to fire, fire." It was dark and I didn't see anybody but I pulled the trigger. That's the only time I fired a weapon in Korea. Then it was back to the tent and back to work.

You had some opinions about corpsmen based upon your experiences.

There were corpsmen who had been seasoned in World War II and there were corpsmen as green as I was. They didn't have to fight with rifles but they went to where they were called. They were always on the go. I wasn't up with the companies to see them, but at the rate at which they were getting hit, these guys were unsung heroes. When the call went out for corpsmen, they went.

One memory stands out. It was November 27th about 10 pm. Our unit was point battalion for the Division and we were a few miles northwest of Yudam-ni. There had been some firing during the day and we had stopped for the night. Seven or eight of us were sitting around in a tent. There was a lantern going. It was cold. The wind was blowing. And a corpsman was eating celery soup. Who ever even heard of celery soup? Now there's vegetable soup or chicken soup, but celery soup? What a waste of time. Why does that stick in my mind? Suddenly this guy slides down the hill right through the side of our tent with no shoe pacs on, no helmet. He says, "Where's the colonel? Where's the colonel? I need to tell him. They've overrun us! Fox Company has been overrun." It seems the Chinese were atop the hill just above us.

With that, all of us flew out of the tent, door or no door, right through the sides. I rolled down across a little road, down a gully towards a frozen little creek. It was dark but I hid behind a bunch of bushes and lay there shaking. The attack had started and there was a racket--whistles, bugles, rockets, explosions, and firing. People were shouting. "What do I do?" I thought. I couldn't see what was going on. I asked myself, "What am I supposed to do?" I lay there with another guy. I never knew who he was.

After a while we heard, "Corpsman! Corpsman!" With that, all of us moved back to the aid station and began to treat wounded. Years later when I thought about it, no matter how scared I was, and believe me, I was scared, when you did your job you weren't helpless. You were doing something. There were days on the way back when we'd look up towards dawn and see light shining everywhere through the canvas and realize that the tent was full of bullet holes. But I understood that as long as I was doing something, I didn't sit there like a shaking lump of jelly. Work was a great thing for the doc--it overcame his terror.

You talked about being the rear guard at Yudam-ni and the feeling of hopelessness, that this was Custer's Last Stand all over again.

On the 28th [November] we began moving back to Yudam-ni and came under fire. I remember there was nowhere to hide. There were big boulders and we just lay on the ice. Mortar rounds and fire were coming in. There was a scene where we were going to move further down. We had seen Chinese coming over the mountains and my feeling was, "Let's get the hell out of here. Let's keep going **that** way." At one point, a column of Marines led by LT Anderson came along marching further up. Where the hell are they going? Well, I learned they had to protect the rear of our rear guard battalion. We're moving down towards the coast to safety and here's this platoon--20 or 30 men--going to the rear to set up a defense and take on the enemy. I didn't see anybody look scared. I was scared. I thought, "These are different kind of men. These are brave warriors." The reason we ever got out was because of these brave, courageous fighters. It was an incredible sight!

What do you remember about the action at Toktong Pass?

Somewhere about half way between Yudam-ni and Hagaru was Toktong Pass, which I didn't particularly notice on the way up. I have a vivid freeze-frame of it in my mind's eye today for the following reason.

During the days and nights we were on the road between Yudam-ni and Toktong Pass, we were on a little road carved into the side of a mountain. To our left was a several-hundred-foot mountain, and to our right was a drop of hundreds and hundreds of feet. The days were short that time of year so it was dark most of the time. Most of the time during the day, we were in the shadow of this mountain. I don't remember much sunlight or I wasn't aware that we were in darkness most of the time until we got to Toktong Pass.

We had been moving slowly. We'd stop and wait until the enemy had been cleared. Then we'd move and then stop. We spent days and nights on that road. When we got to Toktong Pass, looking forward I could see a turn in the road. The hill on our left kind of fell away and I watched troops ahead of me--six, eight, or ten men--get on the right side of a vehicle and at someone's signal they took off and started to run. When I finally got to that point of departure, I saw this brilliant, white, snow-covered field in brilliant sunshine. It was like being backstage in a theater where people stand before going onstage. And at a signal, we began running in the wide open across this brilliant white snow field, crouched over. It seemed quiet but for the sound of bullets flying. They make a buzz when they go by--a high-pitched "bzz, bzz," like bees. About half way across we stopped because we found two Marines in the snow. Quickly, we ran to the back of a crackerbox ambulance. When we opened it up we found there was absolutely no room. We had somebody on the fenders and there was literally no place to put these two fellows.

Then there was a moment that seemed to stretch out forever when the driver was looking at me. "What do we do?" It seemed like forever between his question and my saying, "Go!" It couldn't have been more than a split-second but it felt like an eternity with that white, bright sun, the white snow, bullets singing, being nakedly exposed out in the open.

It seemed like there were a thousand things coming in at you. If that ambulance goes that's your invisible shield protecting you from the bullets. You want to run but you have to stay with these guys. All of a sudden, that road with the hills to the left and the drop off to the right seemed like a safer place. And then off went the ambulance. We waited for another vehicle, got the wounded aboard, and then took off and ran until we caught up the line of troops on the road.

I've read that as the Marines withdrew from the hills and moved south, the Chinese were always nipping at your heels.

We couldn't move a quarter of a mile before we'd see Chinese pouring over the hill we just left. They were all around us. We felt they were going to overrun us then or in the next hour. I felt like I was literally waiting to die.

When the withdrawal from Yudam-ni began I was going by scuttlebutt. One story was that we were going to break up and everybody would be on their own across country. That was the most disastrous thing I could imagine. I had no idea which way I was supposed to go or how to get there. Well, that rumor didn't last long but I'll never forget the feeling. To this day, I have about six compasses!

To have walked the distance we did out of there is mind-boggling until you consider the Marines who ran up and down the hills covering us. It's one thing to make the hike but how about the guys who were running up and down tangling with the enemy on top of those ridges.

Just last night I found myself reading for the first time that on the 25th of November [MGEN Walton] Walker's 8th Army began its retreat. The people we were supposed to be linking up with had already been retreating for 2 days and we were still heading up in that direction. Why didn't we know that?

You told us earlier about Corsairs and how you felt about them.

When I was a kid I used to love it when it snowed. It meant we could go sledding and play in it. For years after I got back I felt sadness and anxiety when it began to snow and I could never figure out why until one day it occurred to me. When it snowed up there in the north the Corsairs wouldn't be flying and there would be no air cover. We were on our own.

For years afterwards, I kept models of Corsairs. They're up in the attic somewhere now. Those gull-winged planes gave us close air support. It was like having a whole artillery regiment where you wanted them when you wanted them. We saw them in action in the south and thanked God for them. But up north when we were encircled and felt isolated and helpless, to have those guys fly by at eye level and see their faces smiling, and have them give us the "thumbs up" sign, that really made us feel good. You could see them napalming the enemy. You could see them rocketing or machine-gunning. You knew they were blasting our way out. It was nice to have their help. Someone would ask, "Where are the Chinese during the day?" The Corsairs are keeping them down. They were literally rescuing angels. I've always thought that if hadn't been for Corsairs, we might not have have gotten out.

Did you treat any Chinese wounded?

On the way down between Yudam-ni and Hagaru someone brought in two or three Chinese prisoners. These guys were dressed in quilted uniforms and were wearing sneakers. You never saw frostbite like this--huge bullae on their feet. You can't be out there wearing sneakers like these guys wore. They just froze. Some of their wounded had been treated by their docs, who packed their wounds with gauze to get some hemostasis. We used pressure dressings on our men. We couldn't do anything for the Chinese and, when we moved out, we left their wounded behind.

Do you remember reaching Hagaru?

For days we were moving down from Yudam-ni to Hagaru and the Marines were fighting like hell. I don't know how many days we walked. I never rode. I always walked. But I noticed that as we got closer to Hagaru, everybody began changing the way they walked, so when we entered Hagaru, we were marching like military men. What a feeling you got marching into the arms of troops who were friendly. Then we were in a bigger valley called Hagaru. And that too would become a nightmare but at least we didn't feel so alone and isolated.

At Hagaru all our wounded were turned over to Regiment. There was an airstrip so they were flying them out. When they had an air drop you had to run to get out of the way. When those things came down--food and military supplies-- they'd flatten tents. They'd go through huts. But it was exciting. It made you feel good. They hadn't forgotten us.

When you got to Hagaru, you wrote a letter to your parents.

I used to write letters. "The scenery's great." That kind of stuff. I asked a wounded Marine to mail a letter for me if he got to Japan. He slipped it into a pocket. And he had been bleeding. The letter I sent to my parents came smeared with blood. They had been reading *The Evening Bulletin*, which is now extinct. It had a headline "Fifth Marines Cut to Ribbons." My mom read that and she literally saw **me** cut to ribbons and fainted.

Your letter certainly didn't square with what people were reading in the newspapers. As I recall, it wasn't just in that paper. It was in *Time* and *Newsweek*. Everyone, including the brass in Washington, had written you guys off.

I thought it was true. There's no way we can get out of this. We're too far up in the mountains. There are too many people surrounding us. There was one night along the road when I was with COL Roise. I said, "Colonel, what do you think? Do we have any chance?"

And he said, "Don't worry, doc. We're getting out of this." And I thought he was just saying that. I didn't believe him. He was a great fighting Marine, a pugnacious kind of guy. I remember he had been hit by shrapnel near Seoul. "Colonel, let me send you back," I said.

"That's all right, Doc. Leave it be."

I had to urge him to finally go back and have it removed. Marines would get hit and they wouldn't necessarily come to sick bay. They'd keep on fighting. There were a lot of guys who were frozen. People didn't come to sick bay and say, "I'm frozen." They kept fighting!

When you finally got to Hagaru you still encountered heavy fighting.

On December 6th, troops had been filing out of Hagaru all day on the way to Koto-ri. By nightfall, there were few troops left to defend our position from the same number of Chinese we had been fighting for 3 days. That's when they brought in CAPT Uel Peters sitting on a litter holding a tourniquet. His leg was out like that, a compound fracture, displaced, and his flesh was glowing. We were in a tent with a Coleman lantern which didn't provide great light. But when they brought him in we could see his leg glowing. "What the hell's that?" I asked. One of my corpsman told me it was white phosphorus. I thought, "What the hell do you do with white phosphorus?" He gave me a solution, told me it was copper sulfate, and told me to dab it on the wound. I remember dabbing it for hours until all the glow went away. That corpsman knew about white phosphorus from the South Pacific battles of World War II.

Peters had flesh and bone exposed but his wound was not actively bleeding. In fact, I don't remember seeing any active arterial bleeding while I was up there but for that guy who had the block of ice on his shoulder. Peters subsequently lost that leg. The thought has many times

gone through my head, "Could I have done something different?" But I guess I did the best I could. These kinds of thoughts stay with you. Years ago they were troublesome; now they're just memories that are still painful.

Did you see the C-47 evacuation planes at Hagaru?

I saw them from a distance. I knew they were coming and I knew they were taking off. I also knew that our wounded were getting out.

Was it there in Hagaru that you met Dr. [CAPT Eugene] Hering? Hering was Division Surgeon.

I don't remember where I met CAPT Hering. It might have been there or it might have been at Kimpo. Chester Lessenden was the Fifth Marines Regimental Surgeon. I think he's still alive in Topeka. From what I read, he had frostbite pretty badly. Lessenden made the decision who was to be evacuated and who was to stay. If you were worse than he was, you could get on the plane. If you were not as bad as he was, you stayed.

You must have seen your share of Chinese dead out there?

Like cordwood. In the mornings at Hagaru, you could see piles of Chinese who had run into the crossfire of our machine guns. They were just mowed down all over the place. They were like ants . . . no . . . like rats coming over the side of the hill.

What were some of the wounds you saw?

I told you about the head wound. I told you about the leg wound. There were some belly wounds. There were countless extremity wounds that blur in my mind. They were easy. There was one guy who had a sucking chest wound. I remember getting an idea. I said, "Does anybody have a rubber?" Then thinking, "Who would have condoms up here?" One guy had one. I unrolled it and taped it over the wound and cut some little slits in it thinking that if he developed a pressure pneumothorax, the air would get out. I was able to get a helicopter for this kid.

Remember, the helicopters were not like the ones they had in Vietnam. This had a bubble for the pilot and if you had a guy on a litter, half of him stuck out. He was the only one I got out by helicopter. We saw helicopters that looked like the wind had dashed them against the sides of the mountains. They looked like broken little toys so there weren't a lot of helicopters flying.

What would be the most number of wounded you had charge of at one time?

We had a lot of walking wounded. It seems like hundreds. COL Roise says I took care of 600 casualties from Yudam-ni to Hungnam. I don't know where he got that number. I don't have records. The 600 casualty number appears on a citation I received from the Marine Corps.

I understand that at Hagaru you became rear guard again.

Oh yes. At Hagaru the 5th and 7th [Marines] had linked up with the Division CP. But we had to leave there. On the 6th of December everybody was funneling out of that valley blowing up supplies we didn't want to leave for the enemy. We were headed for a place called Koto-ri. Well, we were the last ones left that night. I was thinking, "We're dead!" All the

troops who had been fighting off the Chinese had gone and we were still there. And we had the same enemy to deal with. That was a night! That was the night they brought in Karle Seydel.

East Hill at Hagaru is burned into my mind because it's associated with Uel Peters and Karle Seydel. Seydel died on East Hill.

Our aid station was frequently surrounded by unexploded mortars. About half a city block away, East Hill began to rise. It reminds me of that Prudential ad with the Rock of Gibraltar. There were a lot of hills but it stuck out. It was a big, ominous, dark, forbidding presence. To me it has to be symbolic because that's where many of our troops were dying. And then when everyone started to leave Hagaru on the 6th [December] it's where our battalion and parts of other battalions were left behind as rear guard. It seemed like "We made it this far. Now they've all left us here alone." I know East Hill was being fought over because it had military importance. But it became a bad place because someone very important to me died there. Karle Seydel was the guy who took me under his wing on the ship before Inchon and had shown me the ropes. He had taught me how to put my pack on . . . He was a Marine's Marine and yet he stood on the railing of that ship going to Inchon reciting poetry. He was important to me because he reached out to me. "Don't worry, Doc. You're with amtracs and you're not with the infantry. You'll be all right."

They brought Karle in and he had a bullet in his forehead. He was dead. I remember . . . so many dead, so many wounded. But this guy I knew better than I knew anybody. I spent more time with him. It seemed so terrible. I wanted to do something, but he was dead.

Every Memorial Day after that I'd reminisce and Karle Seydel's name would come up. I'd remember him there at Hagaru. His face was gray and he was dead. I didn't want to believe it. He wasn't the first dead Marine I saw but he was a very important Marine. I have a hard time with his death to this day.

Many years later, I got a call from somebody who was involved with missing in action from Korea. He wanted to know if he could give my phone number to a lady who was a relative of Karle's. This was 34 years later. So she called me and I told her what I could. It seems that Karle's father had been a lawyer at the Nuremburg trials. He refused to believe that Karle had died and thought he was a prisoner of war. He spent 30 some years going through all kinds of channels to find his son. I could have told him. The father died 2 years before she called.

The first night at Yudam-ni, Anderson's company had been overrun. It was the only time I ever used medicinal brandy. He was the guy I mentioned who was marching the "wrong way" that second day. On the first night, late, he had come in. I said, "Take two of these and sit in that corner for awhile." I gave him two bottles of brandy. After an hour or two, he left. And it was the next day he was marching the other way as ordered.

In '57, I got a call from MAJ Tilton Alvah Anderson. He was going to be in Cherry Hill [NJ]. So my wife and I went there and we had this great reunion. He gave me a copy of a five-book series on Korea by Montross[1] and inscribed it for me. It was so great . . . and then he died in Vietnam. All the guys I knew and befriended died.

At one point during the withdrawal, the Chinese had blown a strategic bridge over Funchilin Pass. And you thought, "This is it now." Yet it seemed that every time you turned around, it was, "This is it." It was always Custer's Last Stand all the way down.

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[1]Montross, Lynn, and Canzona, Nicholas A., *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea, 1950-1953.*

I remember the feeling I had when we got to that bridge. There was a tremendous drop. I saw jeeps slowly going across. When I finally got to go, I thought of what a long drop that was.

How much clearance did you have on either side when you went across?

The bridge looked like it had tracks for wheels so the wheels wouldn't stray. I recall it looked lacy, like metal you can see through. You've crossed bridges that you can see through. It was something like that.

And you were walking the whole way so you didn't have the luxury of being in a vehicle. The bridge was quite a feat of engineering. They dropped pieces of the bridge by parachute.

And the first span missed and they had to drop another one.

Was there a time, as you got further out of the mountains that it dawned on you that maybe, just maybe, you were going to get out of this?

There is one view I have where we came around the bend of a road and all of a sudden I could see a plain in the distance. There were no longer peaks and valleys. It was a broad plain. We were at the bottom of a mountain range and we were prepared to head down towards the sea. This was after the treadway bridge. And then they put us on trains--flat cars--wood-burning trains--and took us the last 10 or 20 miles. It was at night. You were sitting on a flat car with one Marine right up against you and another right behind you. We were numb with exhaustion. A shower of sparks from the locomotive was falling on us, and I remember watching the sparks burning holes in my parka--pretty, orange holes burning in my parka.

When did you finally see the Navy ships?

We got to Hungnam and showers and food. I don't have a memory of seeing the ships until we were getting ready to board them. Being pulled aboard those ships, I remember thinking, "The Navy didn't abandon me. The Navy didn't forget about me." When I got to the top of the ladder, a couple of sailors grabbed me and I went sliding across the deck as happy as a lark. The first time I walked into a bathroom and started peeling my clothes off I looked at myself. Skin and bones . . . and this beard. I had lost 33 pounds.

I'm sure you all had beards by then. Nobody had stopped to shave.

We all had beards and frozen nasal secretions.

Where did you go after you boarded the ship?

We went down to Pusan and figured we were all going to Japan. After all, what we'd been through. But that didn't happen. We went to Masan, a little farther away from Pusan and there we encamped. We spent New Year's Eve at Masan. A lot of people got drunk. Two Marines were killed by stray rounds because guys were firing their rifles. What a waste.

Two Chosin survivors were killed celebrating?

Yes. They were sleeping and hit in their bunks by somebody firing their weapons.

What was the purpose of encamping there?

To regroup and get ready to go back into action. At some point before then I received orders to a medical company where I spent a couple of months doing very little. One appendectomy sticks in my mind. Then we got orders to Camp Pendleton and they gave us 30 days to get there. A friend and I went to Japan and got "lost" for 10 days. Then we got to Hawaii and got "lost" for 10 days. Then we got to LA and got "lost" for 10 days, and finally showed up at Pendleton on the 30th day.

How long did it take to recover physically? I realize emotional recovery is another thing.

When I got to St. Albans [Naval Hospital]I hit my highest weight. I was up to 185. It had taken 4 or 5 months to get up to that weight.

It's been 50 years since you were in Korea. Do you still remember the emotions you experienced back then?

I remember fear, depression, anxiety, panic, guilt feelings. Besides survivors' guilt, which was an immediate thing, there was a longer-lasting guilt. When I heard that CAPT Uel Peters had died a few years earlier I thought, "Could I have done something differently?" Could I have somehow saved him if I was smarter, brighter, quicker? Of course, I realize that you do the best you can with what you've got. You're not omnipotent.

I also had the feeling of utter hopelessness. There's no way to get out of here. We're too far away from the sea. We're 70 miles up in the mountains and they've got us surrounded. And they could have destroyed us. But they didn't. Maybe they knew they were up against Marines who knew a thing or two about how to fight.

Down south it was getting used to living in the field. Up north it was, "I'm going to die any minute or slowly freeze to death." On the way down from Yudam-ni, one of the guys who had just returned from a patrol gave me a magnificent oriental sword he found. I wondered what an ornamental dress sword was doing up in the mountains of North Korea? I remember thinking what a trophy it was. And then I remember thinking, "I'm not getting out of here" so I threw it in the snow.

And yet I couldn't see the big picture. Maybe the Marines had a plan, but I don't know. In my mind--and maybe I'm pessimistic by nature--there was no way to get out. I've never been a particularly religious person but I found myself praying to God every 10 seconds. There are many times now when something comes up and I find myself saying, "Well, you were praying pretty hard then. What's different now?" And another thought I had was, "If I can ever get out of here, I'll never be unhappy again. There's no way I can be unhappy again if I survive this." Well, guess what? It doesn't work that way.

What about the feeling of helplessness you experienced?

You did not feel helpless if you were doing something. To be doing nothing is the worst possible thing. Perhaps the sprinkling of sulfa into their wounds was more for me than it was for the patient. In a bombardment when you were doing nothing but waiting for a shell to drop, you were completely helpless and that was traumatic as hell and the most devastating thing in the world. If you were fighting you might be scared, but at least you were doing something. If I was treating the wounded I was doing something. Everything is traumatic at different levels but what I'm talking about is the utter helplessness I felt when we were under fire.

What are some of the psychological effects that have been evident since then?

Years later I felt I had to leave general practice. I was not seeing my family and I was working 20 hours a day. You can't do good medicine when you're spending just a few minutes with a patient. If you're going to see 70 or 80 patients a day you're going to miss too much. It got to be intolerable so I thought I'd better do something else. I was going to go into radiology but for many years, following Korea, I had been plagued by anxieties--I guess symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. I wasn't sleeping. I was drinking more than I should, and I was anxious all the time--nightmares, etc. Why did I go into psychiatry? I didn't make that decision because of what I just told you. I just thought I'd like to go into psychiatry.

It wasn't until after I was in psychiatry and gotten into my own analysis that I came to recognize that I had gone into psychiatry seeking help for what **I** was feeling. And what I was feeling was a lot of discomfort related to experiences that started in combat.

Obviously, I can only speak for myself, but when we were under attack and mortar shells, artillery shells, and bullets were flying, I was scared. Having seen the wounds, I was expecting injury or death at any moment. Many times I'd be clawing the ground unable to do anything but wait for something to hit me. That's awfully traumatic and awfully painful. And you don't forget about it. You'd like to forget about it and indeed you do put it aside but it's embedded in your psyche and it has a life of its own. When I used to go to reunions and talk to these old guys, my peers, I heard about all the multiple marriages, multiple jobs, drinking, drugs, anger. A lot of guys were suffering post traumatic stress disorder and didn't know it. I was suffering and didn't realize why. I blamed it on the stress of work but in therapy I found out it was related to experiences I had in combat. A kid can get it being abused by a parent. You get it in an earthquake, a train wreck, anything where you're helpless and think you're going to die. Well, combat's a great place for that. Over the years, I've heard from many Marines about frostbite injuries, but I've never heard from anybody about post traumatic stress disorder. I think it's not recognized. I think it's part of their lives and they go on as best they can.

For many years I couldn't bring myself to tell anybody I was scared. But that was such an overwhelming emotion, I'm now not ashamed to say it. I think everybody was fearful. But the challenge was, doing what you've gotta do scared or not. It doesn't matter that you came from a broken home or you didn't have this or that as a kid. Everybody's had one thing or another in their lives. Everyone's been shortchanged one way or another. Everyone's been traumatized. But given all that, the question is what are you doing now? Do the right thing now despite your feelings.

Do you have any comments on the Marines you served with at Chosin?

I'm not equipped to evaluate warriors but, from what I saw, these guys were superb. I never saw a Marine officer or enlisted man who looked scared. They doesn't mean they weren't. Everybody was doing what they had to do. I never saw anybody smile and never heard any joking or clowning up there. But those Marines fought and fought well, and maintained discipline. They took care of the aid station and protected it. They supplied the vehicles when I needed them. They looked out for their wounded. They brought all their wounded back. That first day when Roise held the whole battalion up until we got those four wounded loaded on the vehicles showed he cared about his men. They outfought the Chinese!

Can you talk about the medical capabilities of the battalion aid station.

When the decision was made that doctors belonged in battalion aid, that was it. You were there. Whether you were needed or not, you were still there. I never got to do anything that a corpsman couldn't do. I wasn't really doing what I had been trained to do. I did what needed to be done but it was in the dirt, done in a hurry, and it was not clean.

So it was not the best use of physicians.

No. Not at rifle battalion level. Further back, surgical skills were vital. There are few things in my life that I can feel as proud of as my service to this country in Korea with the Second Battalion, 5th Marines. I didn't like it one damn bit. I was there and luckily I survived. The Navy needed doctors and I happened to be one of them. I've been prouder of that than anything I've ever done.